NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

THE bulletin

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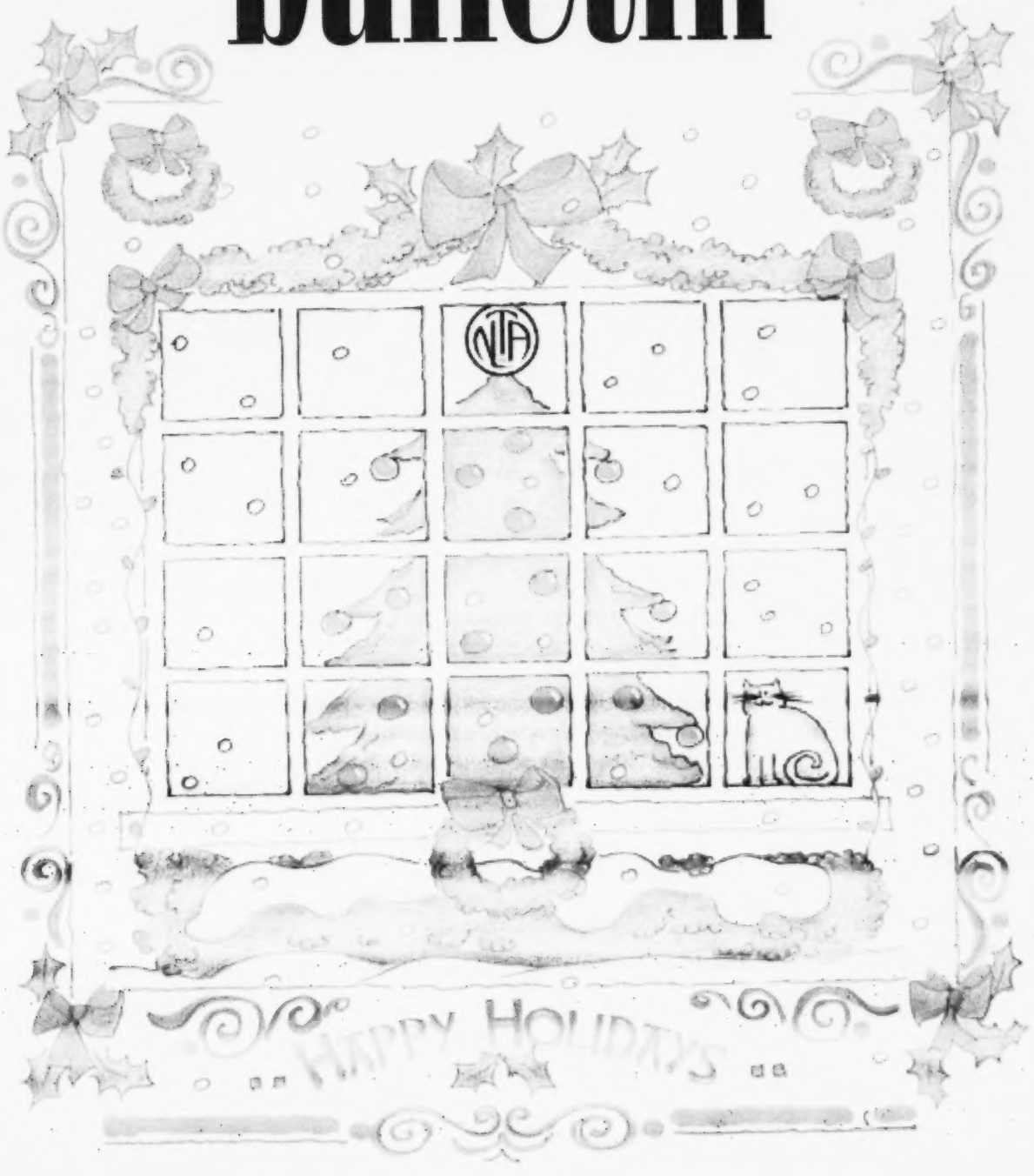

Tis The Season… Again!

by LESLEY-ANN BROWNE

The Christmas season is enchanting as stores and other public locations display their array of decorations and shopping assumes an entirely new meaning. Although the fall is my favorite time of year, I still feel a warmth and charm for Christmas as well as a thrill as we get ready for the big day. I noticed an advertisement in one of our local papers a few days ago notifying kids that letters to Santa will be printed soon and encouraging them to send their letters early.

As an adult I still experience the same excitement at Christmas time even though the rules have changed a little. I envy the little ones their anticipation of the unknown and wondering what will be under the tree on Christmas morning. With the truths that I know as an adult, and the ones that I choose to deny, I often wonder what I would do if the opportunity did exist to ask Santa for a few items. What would I ask for? I guess it would be selfish not to ask for world peace and an end to child poverty and hunger. I would have to ask for an end to war and disease and terrorism. But these requests never did fall within the realm of Santa. So I would ask for something just for me. I could ask for no more line-ups at the instant teller as the person in front pays a year's worth of bills, or at the grocery store when I realize that I should not have had that third beverage with dinner. I could ask that when I fly I never have to be seated next to people who snore, or hog the arm rest, or who want to talk nonstop about their new found religious beliefs or miracles that they have witnessed and who want to pray for me. Or I could ask Santa to give me the sense to tell them to be quiet. But again, these things are not usually something that you would ask for from Santa.

Perhaps it would be best to just stick with the basics, like new clothes or a few toys. My definition of toys has definitely changed with my age and might make Christmas morning more interesting.

I will be having an unusually busy Christmas this year as I have visitors coming from Toronto and Ireland. I have never met the four from Ireland which could result in a stressful visit or a great Irish Christmas. I anticipate the latter, but time will tell. I am already busy making lists of who will sleep where and trying to figure out how to cook for 11 people. I have only recently mastered the correct portions for three with leftovers for the dog, so I anticipate a few anxious moments as I readjust my measurements.

As you prepare for the holidays I trust you do so with wonderful memories of years gone by and a warmth and anticipation of what may come. Whatever your plans for this holiday season, may your hearts be light and your homes filled with happiness and good cheer. My sincere best wishes for a safe, happy, holiday season and all the best for the new year.

THE bulletin

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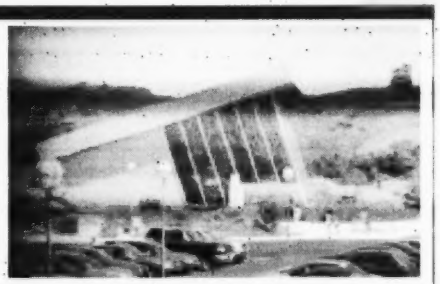
Volunteers needed to share Earth's wonders at the Johnson Geo Centre St. John's.



For information about volunteering, call Michelle at 709-737-7884.

Some background in earth science or astronomy is useful, but not necessary.

FEBRUARY 13, 2004

Janeway Day

An opportunity to teach children about the true value of helping others.

Every year, Janeway Day in the schools provides an opportunity for children in this province to help other children. In fact, since 1986, students and teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador have donated more than $677,000 to the Janeway. That's something for us to be proud of!

Make sure you participate in Janeway Day 2004; here's how:

BEFORE FEBRUARY 13TH...

- Announce the project and explain what's involved.
- If possible spend some time discussing the Janeway Hospital with your class or have a student who has been a patient at the hospital tell classmates about the experience.

ON FEBRUARY 13TH...

- Ask students (and teachers) to forego the equivalent of recess monies for this one day. (That's their donation to the Janeway.)

Janeway Day in the Schools is the only fundraising effort sponsored by the NLTA.

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

CODROY VALLEY

Valley students visit Petites

Last June the Grade 2 class at Belanger Memorial in Codroy Valley visited the community of Petites. In social studies the class researched settlement in Newfoundland and Labrador and part of the research included a field trip to a dying community.

Petites is located on the southwest coast of the island portion of the province, about 10 kilometers west of Rose Blanche. Petites has a population of less than 20; however, in the 1960s it was well over 200.

In Petites, the students visited a school without children and a church without a regular pastor. They saw abandoned homes with paths growing over.

Students from Belanger Memorial arriving in the community of Petites.

The plight of Petites has similarly been felt in numerous outports in the past and as recent as Fall 2002 with the resettlement of Great Harbour Deep. The cod moratorium in 1992 and the present day crisis in the fishery are still causing out-migration from outport Newfoundland. Despite the seriousness of the topic and its implication for the province, the students had an unforgettable day. The boat ride to Petites with David Savoury, a local tour guide in Rose Blanche, was a highlight. One student was heard exclaiming as the boat skipped over the waves, "Mr. Savoury, Mr. Savoury, go faster, go faster when we're going over the bumps."

As a follow-up to the research on resettlement, the class gave a presentation to parents and elementary students. Against a backdrop of a community in ruin, the presentation consisted of an explanation of the steps into doing a research project, the singing of Simani's *Outport People* and Gary O'Driscoll's *Out from St. Leonard's*, a slide show of Petites, the reciting of Pat Byrne's *West Moon*, and a display of the children's individual books on resettlement. The program concluded with a traditional Newfoundland lunch of tea, toutons and tarts.

SWIFT CURRENT

Lacing up for literacy

On May 15, 2003, teachers and students from Swift Current Academy laced up their walking shoes to raise money to support literacy programs at their school. The money raised will be spent on purchasing guided reading books for the library.

The organizing committee was made up of the school-based Literacy Group and consisted of all teachers at the school who teach language arts. The primary program specialist with Vista School District, Pamela Williams, also participated in the walk. "I thought that the project was great," she said. "It was a collaborative effort to ensure that good quality literature gets into the hands of all students in Swift Current."

Students from Swift Current Academy join their principal, Dean Ingram, along the final leg of their walk.

Approximately 50 students and many of their parents took part. Students collected sponsor money and teachers did the walking. In teams of two, teachers walked 5-6 kilometers per team between Swift Current and Goobies. Students and parents joined teachers in Goobies to complete the final leg of their walk to the Irving Big Stop Restaurant where students were treated to hamburgers and pop, compliments of Irving.

"It was quite inspiring to partake in an event where staff and students were so enthusiastic," said Pamela. The event raised almost $1,700 and the intent is to make the walk an annual fundraiser.

CANADA

Sunshine Dreams for Kids

Over 130 children in Newfoundland and Labrador have had individual dreams fulfilled by Sunshine Dreams for Kids, an organization founded in 1987 by an Ontario Provincial Police officer. The organization provides dreams to children who are challenged by severe physical disabilities. Volunteers and fundraisers are always needed for this very worthwhile organization. The only major fundraiser for the year is a walk that is held in June. This past June the walk raised approximately $28,000.

Many teachers have witnessed first hand the excitement of a child who has received a dream. Each dream costs approximately $5,000, so it is obvious that the national association is very helpful.

Danielle Spratt, a teacher at Holy Cross Elementary School in St. John's, is Dream Fulfillment Chair for Sunshine in Newfoundland and Labrador and a very active volunteer with Sunshine. If you would like more information on volunteering or helping with a small fundraising effort, contact Patsy Yetman, Awareness Chair, at 709-722-0934 or you can contact Sunshine Dreams for Kids at 1-800-461-7935. You will get a lot of pleasure from viewing the website at www.sunshine.ca.

Submissions sought for Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence 2003-04

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence honour outstanding and innovative elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines who best equip their students to meet the challenges of our changing society and knowledge-based economy.

Up to 15 Certificates of Excellence, including a financial award of $5,000 and up to 50 Certificates of Achievement, including a financial award of $1,000 are presented annually. Financial awards are issued to the recipient's school or teaching institute (as identified on the nomination form) to be spent under the recipient's direction. When a winning teacher changes schools, financial awards go to the school at which the recipient was teaching at the time of nomination. Awards funds may be used for professional development, equipment (such as computers, software, and audio-visual and laboratory equipment), resource materials, website development, teaching aids, or other tools to improve teacher and student learning.

Nominees must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents and must teach full time in a Canadian school. Part-time teachers or administrators may be nominated provided that they teach 2.5 days a week in a classroom setting or as defined by provincial or territorial guidelines.

Nomination forms and guidelines are available at www.pma-ppm.ic.gc.ca or by sending an e-mail to pmawards@ic.gc.ca or by calling the program hotline at 1-800-575-9200. The deadline for nominations is January 16, 2004.

"No smoking on school property, Ms. Hanes."

The True Spirit of the Season

No matter how old we get most of us look forward to Christmas with enthusiasm. We all have different reasons for our anticipation. Children are excited about new toys, letters to Santa Claus, and await his visit to their house with bated breath. Adults look forward to a period of relaxation away from the normal daily grind, to pleasant times with family and friends, festive occasions with an abundance of food, giving, loving and laughter. These are all the traditional hallmarks of the Holiday Season.

For an increasing minority there will be more anxiety than anticipation or celebration. Every year there are more parents who worry about having enough nutritious food, warm clothing, and proper shelter for their children; let alone whether or not the very latest doll or electronic game will be available in sufficient numbers. That is why at this special time of year teachers continue to inspire by example through their many acts of kindness to children and others. Many other kindnesses are done in secret, like the extra toy or piece of clothing placed beneath the "Happy Tree", the "little something extra" dropped into the Salvation Army's Christmas kettle, or the quiet sharing of food hampers with neighbours. This, of course, reflects the true spirit of the Season.

Whatever Christmas means to you, may you have a blessed one. On behalf of your Provincial Executive Council I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

"May God bless us, everyone!"

Fred Douglas

Once again, as the Christmas season rapidly approaches, I sincerely welcome this opportunity as NLTA Executive Director to extend season's greetings to all of our members and their families. It is my sincere wish that you will experience a festive and joyous Christmas season and a safe and prosperous 2004.

We all remember the eagerness and anticipation with which we awaited Christmas during our younger years. We still see it in our children and grandchildren and you still see it in the faces of your younger students as Christmas draws nearer. Let us continue to let that anticipation and enthusiasm in the young infuse our own Christmas preparations.

All of you have experienced a very busy fall as the first three months of the new school year have quickly sped by. We must now seize the opportunity provided by the Christmas season to set aside the often hectic demands of work and take some time to relax and recharge the batteries while focusing on family, friends and loved ones. Notwithstanding the challenges and demands that we all face daily, this season gives us an opportunity to pause and give thanks for the many positive things in our lives. It is also the time to reflect on the importance of the role we all must play as members of a caring society and how we might help make Christmas a more joyous time for those less fortunate among us.

On behalf of all the staff at the NLTA who work daily on your behalf, may I offer best wishes for a joyous Christmas and a very Happy New Year. May the peace, love and glad tidings that are the essence of the Christmas message be with you throughout the holiday season and afterwards.

Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.

— Calvin Coolidge, 30th US President

Edward Hancock

Dana Burridge

Dana's NLTA involvement started in his first year teaching when he was a charter member and communications officer of Taylor's Brook Branch. Throughout his career his involvement at the branch level in Deer Lake included School Board-Teacher Liaison Committee, communications officer, political action officer, secretary, treasurer, vice-president and president.

His Provincial Executive experience (1999-03) includes the following committees: Finance and Property, Group Insurance, Educational Leave, Deferred Salary Leave, Pooled Investment, and Equity Issues in Education. He is presently chair of the Professional Issues in Teaching Committee.

Dana presently teaches at Pasadena Academy and is active in school improvement initiatives. He continues to be a vigilent activist in improving the work place for teachers.

Art Callahan

Art has served many years as a Branch President and he is enjoying the challenges presented with his first term on Provincial Executive. Art welcomes the opportunity to impact positive change at the provincial level on behalf of the teachers he represents. He hopes to merit the confidence placed in him by his nominating branch, Waterford Valley, and BGM 2002 delegates.

Art's first executive impression is newfound respect for our Association, similar to the increased admiration for parents upon the birth of the first child. He invites comments from colleagues to facilitate effective representation on their behalf.

Art's teaching career has been in the areas of Religion and Special Education. This year he is teaching Criteria C students at St. Kevin's High in Goulds. Another first-time challenge, Art is enjoying it immensely.

Art is presently a member of the Finance and Property Committee and NLTA Staff Negotiations Committee.

Bill Chaisson

Bill was elected to Provincial Executive in the spring of 2003 and has been very active at the provincial level of the NLTA. From 1999 to 2003 he was President of the Humber Branch of the NLTA as well as teacher representative and chair for District 3 on the School Board-Teacher Liaison Committee, and from 1989 to 1992 he was member of the Special Education Policy Committee for the Humber St. Barbe Roman Catholic School Board.

In 2003 Bill was recipient of the NLTA President's Award, in 2001 he was a recipient of the NLTA Johnsons Bursary and in 1987 he was awarded the Robert G. Reid Memorial Scholarship. In addition, he received several awards before he began his teaching career in 1988.

Bill is currently principal of St. Gerard's Elementary in Corner Brook. He is presently a member of the Professional Issues in Teaching Committee and the Group Insurance Committee, as well as NLTA representative for Teacher Certification and chair of the ad hoc committee for beginning and early career teachers.

Pension Information for Substitute Teachers

by PERRY DOWNEY & STEFANIE TUFF

Substitute teachers and other part-time and/or casual employees working with the various departments of the Provincial Government are required to pay pension premiums to the Government Money Purchase Pension Plan (GMPP). Currently, employees pay pension premiums at a rate of 5% of gross salary. The amount is then matched by the Provincial Government and deposited into individual GMPP Plan accounts. Canada Life has administered the Plan since September 1, 2001 and provides any necessary investment information and/or assistance to individual Plan members. The investment firm of Phillips, Hager and North is contracted to invest the monies of the Plan and to provide investment advice. Teachers who have paid into the GMPP Plan or who are currently employed as substitute teachers in the province receive account statements from Canada Life on a quarterly basis. Therefore, it is important for Plan members to ensure that they update their contact information with Canada Life in the event of a change in mailing address.

Substitute teachers may elect to make additional voluntary contributions to their GMPP, in accordance with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) regulations governing retirement investment, in addition to their own payroll deductions and the amount contributed by Government. The total contribution made to the plan, i.e., the employee's, employer's and any voluntary contributions, cannot exceed the maximum allowed under CCRA regulations, presently established at 18% of one's gross yearly earnings or $13,500, whichever is less. If you decide to make additional voluntary contributions, you are responsible for monitoring your contribution level to ensure that your plan has not exceeded the limits as established by CCRA. Both the substitute teacher's contributions and the employer's contributions are reported as a Pension Adjustment (PA) on one's T4 slip and are deducted from the individual's maximum allowable limit when calculating the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) contribution limit. Employee contributions only are tax deductible. Many of the following questions have been raised by substitute teachers and focus on how the GMPP is expected to operate prior to, during, and after retirement.

Q. What does it mean for someone to be "vested" and/or "locked-in" to the GMPP?

A. To be vested and locked-in means that you are entitled to the employer's contributions but are not allowed to withdraw the value of your account in cash. You MUST use those funds to purchase certain types of retirement income for life. You are deemed to be vested upon the completion of two years of Plan membership. Once you are vested, you own all contributions and investment earnings paid to your GMPP account on your behalf. Vesting criteria, which are outlined in the GMPP Act and the Pension Benefits Act, include the following:

1) Completion of two years Plan membership – if you became vested after January 1, 1997 under the two year criteria, only those contributions received after this date will be vested and locked-in. Prior employee contributions may be withdrawn only upon termination, retirement or death. All employer contributions prior to this date will be forfeited.

2) Completion of five years of Plan membership – you are vested and all contributions are locked-in.

3) Completion of ten years continuous service with the same employer, and attainment of age 45 – you are vested and locked-in.

Q. Can I withdraw from the GMPP at any time?

A. If you are seeking active employment as a substitute teacher, withdrawals from the Plan are not permitted. However, if you decide to terminate employment as a substitute teacher and you are not vested or locked-in, you can avail of one of the following options:

1. A cash rebate, less applicable taxes (teacher's contributions only);
2. Your contributions only (not the Employer's) can be transferred to a tax free Registered Savings Plan (RSP) or a Registered Income Fund (RIF); or,
3. Your contributions only (not the Employer's) can be transferred to a tax-free annuity.

Q. What are my options if I am vested and locked-in and wish to terminate my employment as a substitute teacher?

A. If you are vested and locked-in, a cash rebate is not permitted under the GMPP Act, unless certain requirements are met. If you decide to terminate employment as a substitute teacher or you are eligible to retire (age 55 years or older), there are several options available to you.

Option 1: If the total amount of funds in your personal account (i.e. the total contributions of employee, employer and additional voluntary contributions) is less than 10% of the Yearly Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE), you are entitled to receive a lump sum cash rebate of the total accumulated benefit, less applicable taxes. The 2003 YMPE value is set at $39,900. However, this value may change each year in accordance with the factors affecting the level of inflation.

Option 2: If a life annuity yearly value, as quoted by an insurance company based on the total accumulated value in your personal account, is less than 4% of the YMPE, you can receive a cash rebate for the total contributions accumulated in your plan, less the applicable taxes. For example, currently the YMPE equals $39,900; 4% of $39,900 is $1,596. Therefore, if a life annuity yearly value, based on the total accumulated value in your Plan account, is less than $1,596 per year, you can opt to receive a cash rebate, less taxes, for the total accumulated amount.

Option 3: If you have obtained a permanent or replacement teaching position, such that you are making contributions to the regular Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP), you can transfer the accumulated value in your GMPP to the TPP in accordance with the legislation governing the TPP. If you decide to avail of this option, you are advised to contact the Department of Finance, Pensions Division, in order to obtain additional information as to how your transfer request is to be processed. Officials at the Pensions Division can be contacted at (709) 729-3931/3932.

Option 4: If you are vested and locked-in, but not eligible to retire, i.e., not age 55 or older, you can choose one of the following:
(a) Purchase a locked in RRSP or a Locked-In Retirement Account (LIRA). The monies from your GMPP can sit in an RRSP or a LIRA until you reach the age of 69. In other words, you can leave your accumulated GMPP value in a tax-free shelter until just before you turn 70 years old. During your 69th year, you must transfer the total value of your RRSP or LIRA to either a life annuity or a Life Income Fund (LIF), both of which are available through an insurance company. These options will enable you to begin withdrawing a fixed annual income from the accumulated total, for life, as determined by the insurance company of your choice.
(b) Transfer the total value of your RRSP or LIRA to a Life Income Fund (LIF). This option offers flexibility by enabling you to defer the purchase of a life annuity until the end of the year in which you turn 80. In the meantime, you may exercise control over your investment and make withdrawals from the plan, subject to minimum and maximum payment requirements. Details of this option are available from any insurance company.

Option 5: If you are vested and locked-in and are 55 years old, you can avail of Options 4(a) and (b) above, or you can begin receiving benefits from your GMPP accumulated total immediately upon retiring by transferring your total GMPP value from the Plan into a life annuity with an insurance company of your choice. An insurance company will quote you an annual income, known as an annuity, that you can expect to receive for each year during your retirement. The regular income an annuity pays depends on its type, the purchase amount, your age and interest rate levels at the time of purchase. The higher the rates, the more your payment will be and vise versa. Once established, the payment amounts will not change. Payments are taxable as income in the year received. Life annuities are sold only by insurance companies, but term and certain other types of annuities are sold by other financial institutions.

It is therefore very important for individual Plan members who are considering terminating their employment as a substitute teacher or who will soon become eligible for retirement to explore all the options available. Before you make your decision, you are encouraged to seek financial assistance and retirement advice from a financial advisor, bank or other financial institution. Remember financial and/or retirement decisions are expected to last a lifetime.

Any questions concerning your individual GMPP accounts should be directed to Canada Trust by calling 1-800-668-2648.

Perry Downey and Stefanie Tuff are Administrative Officers in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Fire Regulations and Maximum Class Size

by PERRY DOWNEY

During the past number of months, several teachers have contacted the NLTA office with concerns regarding overcrowded classrooms and larger than normal class sizes within their schools. Several have inquired as to whether or not there are fire regulations governing the maximum number of students permitted in a classroom and other rooms within a school, such as, the Industrial Arts Shop, the Home Economics and gymnasium areas.

To find an answer to these inquiries, a letter was forwarded to The Office of the Fire Commissioner on October 2, 2003 with the following questions:

1. Are there any safety and/or fire regulations governing the maximum number of occupants that can occupy a classroom setting at any one particular time? If so, would you provide me with a copy of the Regulations.

2. Is there a difference between the minimum square footage per occupant for a regular classroom setting, as opposed to a Science Laboratory or Industrial Arts Shop? If so, what are the minimums?

3. Is there a minimum width that student desks in a classroom should be apart, i.e., is there a minimum width to aisles in a classroom? If so, what is the minimum?

4. When calculating square footage within a classroom, should floor space occupied by filing cabinets, bookshelves, etc., be deducted from the total square footage before determining the maximum number of occupants which should occupy the space?

By way of response to these questions, the following was received on October 27, 2003 from Mr. Greg Lynch, Fire Protection Officer I, Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs (Office of the Fire Commissioner):

Dear Sirs:

The requirements for classrooms in the Province is outlined in the National Fire Protection Association's Life Safety Code (NFPA 101).

To answer your questions, the floor space (area) of a classroom is determined by measuring the actual "occupiable" space, not including build-ins or other permanent items. The classrooms are permitted to have one person for every twenty (20) square feet. Shops and other vocational areas permit one person for every fifty (50) square feet.

The aisles between columns of seats shall not be less than thirty (30) inches wide (column refers to a line of seats from the front to the back of the class). Each aisle shall lead to an exit aisle which is not less than thirty (30) inches wide. Where desks are used that incorporate a one-piece seat and table, the aisle space on the open side of the desk must be thirty (30) inches. This will permit the closed side to be located at a wall.

If you require additional information, please contact our office.

Given the dimensions of your classroom, if you are responsible for a class of students that is currently larger than the maximum number of students permitted in accordance with the above stated Safety Code and Regulations, it is recommended that you inform your school administrator of the possible fire safety violations immediately. If a satisfactory resolution is not forthcoming, you are advised to document your concerns, in writing, and forward it on to your School Board Director, with a copy provided to your school administrator. Prior to forwarding your letter to the Director, you are expected to inform your school administrator of your intended actions. You are also advised to contact the NLTA office and forward on to the office a copy of your letter for our records.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the above information, please contact an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Perry Downey is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division at the NLTA.

Indoor Air Quality – Tools for Schools Action Kit (IAQ-TFS)

by PERRY DOWNEY

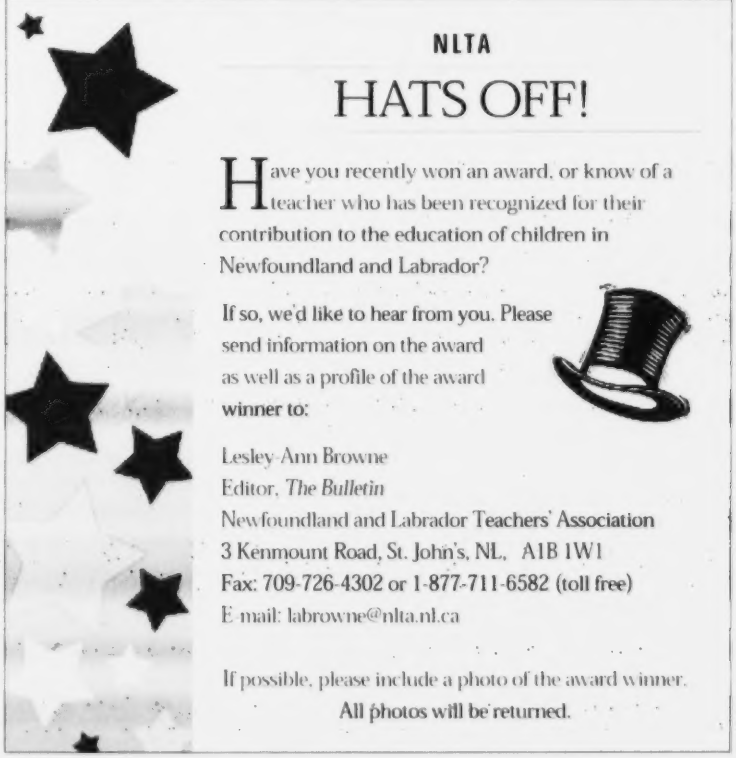
The concerns related to indoor air quality in schools has been a topic that has been discussed for a number of years. As a means of identifying and addressing this issue, Health Canada, through the Health Environment and Consumer Safety Branch, established a Federal/Provincial/Territorial working group known as the Committee on Environmental and Occupational Health (CEOH). The purpose of this Committee was to review the issues related to indoor air quality in schools throughout the country and to make recommendations to address the many concerns.

In February 2003, the CEOH completed its work with the development of a resource known as *Indoor Air Quality – Tools for Schools Action Kit (IAQ-TFS)*. This resource resulted from a cross-Canada collaborative effort from the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments. Representation included environment and occupational health experts. Health Canada, in collaboration with the CEOH-IAQ working group, held three consultation workshops across Canada with key stakeholders (e.g. Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Education, Canadian School Boards Association, Canadian Teachers' Federation, etc.) to receive feedback on the content of the kit. The outcome of the workshops supported a strong need for such a resource. Technical and communication refinements, as well as a national pilot study, were key messages resulting from these workshops. Pilot studies have been conducted in 44 schools in Canada and all have indicated a definite need for a resource of this nature.

The *Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tool Kit* is a practical resource developed to assist school boards, school administrators, and school staffs understand and address IAQ issues and problems. The kit provides clear and easily applicable information and activities that can be used to improve the indoor environment of schools, help prevent indoor air quality problems, and promptly resolve problems if they do arise. It also contains 11 "stand-alone" checklists that can be used to improve indoor air quality in schools. These include: Administration, Health, Air Handling, Classroom, Relocatable Classroom, Building Maintenance, Custodial, Food Services, Waste Management, Renovation and Repair, and Design/Build/Lease-Back Facilities. It is also based on a similar resource developed by the US Environmental Protection Agency and was validated by conducting three cross-Canada workshops and a pilot study.

This kit is available electronically on Health Canada's website at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-secs/air_quality/publications/tools_school/toc.htm.

This resource is very useful to school boards and school administrators, especially if indoor air quality becomes a concern at a school. We strongly encourage school administrators and teachers to review this resource and to use it whenever necessary to help assess addressing any indoor air quality concern which might be brought to your attention. Since Occupational Health and Safety Committees or Worker Health and Safety Representatives are currently being selected in schools throughout the province, members of these committees should also become familiar with this resource.



NLTA

HATS OFF!

Have you recently won an award, or know of a teacher who has been recognized for their contribution to the education of children in Newfoundland and Labrador?

If so, we'd like to hear from you. Please send information on the award as well as a profile of the award winner to:

Lesley-Ann Browne
Editor, *The Bulletin*
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1
Fax: 709-726-4302 or 1-877-711-6582 (toll free)
E-mail: labrowne@nlta.nl.ca

If possible, please include a photo of the award winner.
All photos will be returned.

Purchase of Service for Pension Purposes

by STEFANIE TUFF

The Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) allows for the purchase of certain periods of time/service to count towards worked service under the TPP. Awareness of these provisions is very important for those who are seeking to maximize their retirement options. The following is a summary of the types of service that can be purchased:

Maternity/Parental/Adoption Leave – periods of absence from teaching for the purposes of maternity, parental or adoption leave (up to a maximum of one year for each birth or adoption), as per Article 17 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 28 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement). Although teachers may be eligible for Employment Insurance Benefits during this type of leave, maternity/parental/adoption leave is unpaid leave from the employer's perspective.

Unpaid Sick Leave – periods of unpaid sick leave, as per Article 15.13 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 27.08 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement).

Approved Leave Without Pay – any periods of approved leave without pay, as per Article 19 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 30 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement).

Educational Leave – as per Article 20 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 31 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement). It is important to note that, even when you are on paid educational leave, you are only receiving 80% of your salary and, therefore, you are only making 80% of your normal pension contributions. In order to receive full service credit for a period of paid educational leave, you must purchase the unpaid portion of your leave (20%).

Note: all periods of leave as described above may be purchased as worked service. If the election to purchase is made within six months of returning from the period of leave, the cost will be the required employee contributions based on the salary at the start of the period of leave. This amount will be matched by the employer. If the election to purchase is made later than six months after returning from the period of leave, the cost will be the greater of full actuarial value or the amount calculated as employee contributions based on the salary and contribution rate in effect at the date of election to purchase.

Substitute Teaching Service – periods of substitute teaching time. This option may only be exercised if the teacher is a contributing member of the TPP (i.e. has obtained a permanent or replacement position) at the time the purchase is requested. Former substitute teachers may transfer their contributions in the Substitute Teachers' Pension Plan, known as the Government Money Purchase Pension Plan (GMPP), to the TPP to help offset the cost of this purchase. The period over which the cost may be paid is twice the period being purchased, or the period from the date of election to purchase and the date of retirement, whichever period is shorter. The present rate for the purchase of substitute teaching service is full actuarial cost. Actuarial value is based partially on age. The younger a teacher is at the time of purchase, the lower the actuarial value. Therefore, new teachers should investigate the cost of purchasing substitute time as early as possible after obtaining a replacement or permanent contract.

Members are urged to become familiar with these provisions, especially those for which a six-month purchase opportunity is provided at less than full actuarial value. Any teacher wishing to access these purchase provisions must provide a written request for same to Mr. Lester Porter, Supervisor of Pension Benefits, Department of Finance, P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6. The letter of request should provide the details of the period of time the teacher wishes to purchase and should include any necessary documentation. Teachers may contact the Pensions Division by telephone at 709-729-3931/3932, or by fax at 729-6790.

Stefanie Tuff is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Teacher Salaries
A Cross-Canada Comparison

The following is a comparison of teacher salaries at the highest pay category in teacher salary scales across Canada as of June 30, 2003. The figures are the most current available and were provided to the NLTA by the Canadian Teachers' Federation. A more detailed comparison of major teacher salary scales in Canada is regularly carried out by CTF and is published in its *Economic Services Bulletin.*

Salary information contained below is based on province-wide salary scales for the four Atlantic provinces, Quebec and Saskatchewan, while Territorial agreements are shown for the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. For the remaining four provinces, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia, local collective agreements are in effect and a sample of salary scales from some of the largest urban centres is included.

Province/ Territory	Agreement	Salary Category	Minimum	Maximum	Steps	Avg. Increment Min. to Max. ($)	(%)
NL	Provincial	VII	$48,739	$64,835	10	$1,788	3.2%
PE	Provincial	CVI	$37,269	$57,779	11	$2,051	4.5%
NS[1]	Provincial	TC7	$42,031	$64,691	11	$2,266	4.4%
NB	Provincial	CVI	$39,591	$60,921	11	$2,133	4.4%
QC[1]	Provincial	19	$41,821	$63,527	15	$1,550	3.0%
ON	Elementary: Ottawa-Carleton	A4	$40,891	$72,806	12	$2,901	5.4%
	Toronto	A4	$42,763	$73,100	11	$3,034	5.5%
	Secondary: Ottawa-Carleton	A4	$42,597	$72,806	11	$3,021	5.5%
	London Catholic	A4	$38,795	$71,310	11	$3,252	6.3%
MB[1]	Winnipeg	VI	$42,930	$64,989	10	$2,451	4.7%
SK	Provincial	VI	$42,301	$63,298	11	$2,100	4.1%
AB	Calgary	F	$47,893	$73,007	11	$2,511	4.3%
	Edmonton	6	$47,893	$72,746	11	$2,485	4.3%
BC	Vancouver	6M	$45,772	$68,682	11	$2,291	4.1%
YT	Territorial	VI	$54,234	$77,908	11	$2,367	3.7%
NT	G.N.W.T.[2]	6	$56,952	$81,377	12	$2,220	3.3%
NU	Territorial	6	$57,093	$81,578	12	$2,226	3.3%

[1] Category 20 for Quebec, Category TC8 for Nova Scotia and Category VII for Winnipeg were excluded from the ranking of salary categories. The rationale for excluding those salary categories is that they contain relatively few teachers and may, in some instances, even require a doctoral degree or other qualifications that are not comparable to other provinces or territories.

[2] Applies to teachers outside Yellowknife. Teachers in the Yellowknife Public and Catholic Districts have separate salary scales.

Changes Governing Department Head Status in the Second Language Category

by LLOYD HOBBS

Clause 50.02 of the Provincial Collective Agreement states the conditions under which department head allowances will be paid. It states: *The allowance provided for every department head shall only be paid if: (a) the department in respect of which the teacher has been designated head is a department i) in which all the teachers therein are engaged in teaching in the education fields of English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Religious Education, a second language, or Science; and ii) in which more than sixty (60) hours per week of instruction in Grades VII to XII are provided for in any of the subjects listed in the above sub-clause i); and (b) the teacher is engaged for not less than eighty percent (80%) of his or her assigned teaching time in the education field of the department in respect of which the teacher is the designated head and holds a bachelor's degree with a major or minor in that field.*

The Department of Education's classification of which courses can be used to meet the requirements of Clause 50.02 has caused problems for schools that offer French Immersion programs. Courses taught in a Second Language, such as Math or Social Studies taught in the French language, were not permitted to be counted as French courses if the school wished to use them as such. Therefore, some schools could not meet the time allocation limit of 60 hours per week, and people who would have the academic qualifications to be a Second Language Department Head could not accumulate the required 80% of assigned teaching time, if they were using their second language skills to instruct another subject area in the French language.

Under a new Memorandum of Understanding, schools may use the courses instructed in the Second Language to count for the department head requirements in either the actual subject being taught (Math, Social Studies, Religious Education or Science) or in the Second Language in which the course is being instructed. However, courses taught in a Second Language cannot be counted for department head positions in both the subject area and the Second Language in the same school. Therefore, we would anticipate that only courses not needed to meet the requirements for a department head position in the designated areas of Math, Social Studies, Religious Education or Science would be used to qualify for a Second Language Department Head.

As well, in Clause 50.04(b) it states: *(b) An allowance paid to a department head shall be calculated on the basis of conditions which apply for the current school year, except where it is to the advantage of the department head to utilize the conditions which apply in the previous school year.*

To avoid schools moving courses back and forth from year to year between the Second Language and the other subject areas and thus being able to qualify for more department head positions than would otherwise be possible, the following Memorandum of Understanding has been signed:

Memorandum of Understanding re: Department Head Allowances

A Second Language Department Head will not be entitled to the benefits of Clause 50.04(b) if his/her allowance is eliminated in circumstances where the transfer of courses in the other subject areas back to their original department head category causes the loss of the Second Language Department Head allowance.

If you are in a school where you believe these changes would permit the designation of a Second Language Department Head, please discuss the matter with your school administration and have a request made to your school board.

If you wish further clarification of this change to the conditions governing department head allowances, contact an Administrative Officer in Benefits and Economics Services.

Lloyd Hobbs is the Assistant Executive Director of the NLTA.

Collective Bargaining Update

by PERRY DOWNEY

The work of your Collective Bargaining Committee is drawing to an end. During the spring and fall, your Committee was extremely busy reviewing approximately 600 individual teacher and group submission forms. From the submission forms received, a total of 102 issues were identified, requiring attention. From the 102 issues identified, the following were identified as those which should be considered "the priorities" for the next round of negotiations:

1. Workload
2. Salaries
3. Class Size
4. Pensions
5. Inservice/Professional Development
6. Leave With Pay

Based on the identified priorities and the commentary provided through the submissions process, members of the Collective Bargaining Committee reviewed the NLTA policies, other teacher collective agreements across Canada and other public service collective agreements prior to "putting pen to paper". As a result of their dedicated work, the Committee presented its first draft of opening proposals to the Provincial Executive during its October 17-18, 2003 meeting. After a thorough review and analysis by the Provincial Executive Council, recommendations were made to the Committee for further consideration, prior to submitting its final draft. The final review and acceptance of the Opening Proposals will occur during the Provincial Executive Meeting which is scheduled immediately following the Joint Council Meeting on November 14-15, 2003.

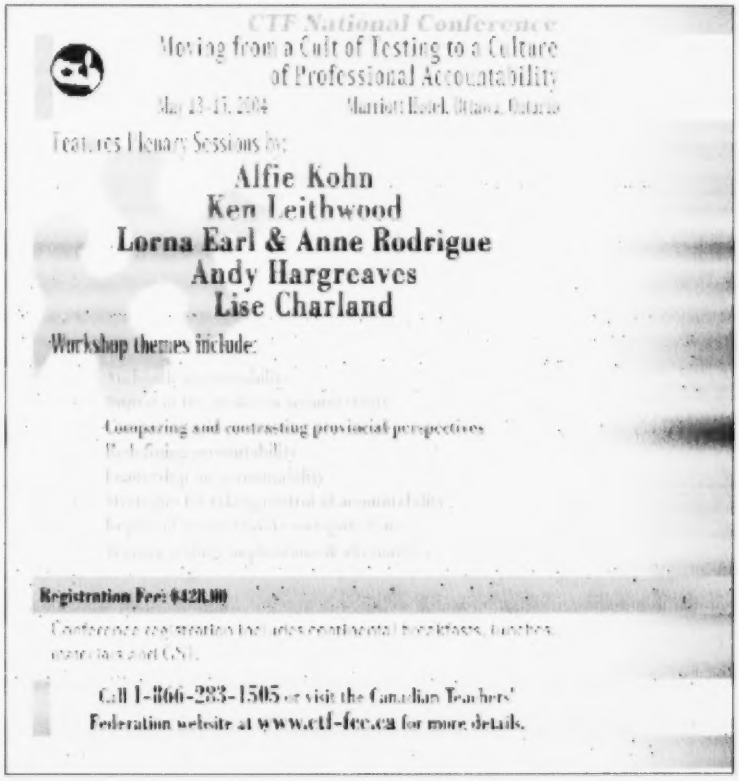
As you are aware, Article 43: Duration of Agreement, permits either party to the Provincial Collective Agreement to serve notice within ten months prior to the expiry date of the Agreement. Since our current contract expires on August 31, 2004, the NLTA will exercise its right to serve notice and to forward its letter to the recently appointed Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, the Honourable Loyola Sullivan. The exchange of opening proposals has not been scheduled, however, the membership will be updated as the next stage of this process unfolds. As per NLTA Policy, a copy of the opening proposals will be provided to all NLTA members immediately following the official exchange of proposals at the negotiating table.

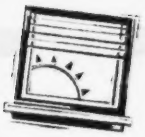
A Word of Thanks...

to the members of the Provincial Collective Bargaining Committee who were selected at the January 17, 2003 Provincial Executive Council Meeting. This committee has worked diligently on behalf of the entire membership for the last nine months ensuring that a comprehensive opening package has been prepared for presentation for the upcoming negotiating process.

Members of this committee are Ted Murphy (Chair), Kevin Foley (Vice-President), Alice Bridgeman, Cindy Churchill, Robert Clarke, Charlie Dillon, Paul Sheppard, Carmelita Traverse, Perry Downey (Staff Consultant) and Colleen Wade (Committee Assistant).

President Fred Douglas, on behalf of Provincial Executive Council and the entire membership, extends a warm and heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you.


CTF National Conference
Moving from a Cult of Testing to a Culture of Professional Accountability
Features Plenary Sessions by:
Alfie Kohn
Ken Leithwood
Lorna Earl & Anne Rodrigue
Andy Hargreaves
Lise Charland
Workshop themes include:
Comparing and contrasting provincial perspectives
Registration Fee: $420.00
Call 1-866-283-1505 or visit the Canadian Teachers' Federation website at www.ctf-fce.ca for more details.



Guilt: Friend or Foe?

by MARIE WALL

Over and over I hear teachers talk about guilt and how it is controlling much of their lives. With this, there is also a sense of powerlessness to do anything about it, except work more and work harder to try to dispel the guilt. This sense of powerlessness stems from the deep misunderstandings about what guilt is, when it is useful, when it is destructive, and how to work with guilt when it arises. In my discussions with teachers, there was the realization that this guilt and powerlessness is a contributor to the levels of stress teachers often experience. Changing how guilt plays out in our lives can be one small step that can have an impact on many areas of life.

People often immediately see guilt as a bad thing; yet "healthy" guilt affects our growth toward responsibility and wholeness. It is when guilt rules our lives that it becomes detrimental. To understand guilt, we first need to understand what it is and from where it comes. Some say that guilt is not a feeling, but rather a mental concept that produces feelings of shame, grief or anger – feelings that are often internalized and can be destructive. Guilt comes from a social awareness of living and working with others, which calls us to deal fairly in a community setting. We experience guilt when we hurt or offend another person. Guilt is the process of judging or condemning one's behaviour, thoughts or words. Guilt is a message from our conscience when we offend someone, just as pain is a physiological response when someone is injured. When guilt is appropriate it is useful in helping someone to right a wrong. Confusion results when guilt is constantly present in one's life and a person is feeling guilty over most everything they do or say.

Two types of guilt can be considered – false and real. False guilt stems from unrealistic expectations of oneself and perceived expectations from others. When false guilt is in its extreme, it dictates a person's life, gives little or no room for self-appreciation, is a cause of low self-esteem, contributes to higher levels of stress, and can lead to destructive attitudes and behaviours. The source of false guilt is in the need for love and acceptance. As a child, this need would be directed towards the parents. In adulthood the patterns may continue but the need for acceptance is often directed at our family, and particularly our peers. There is no room for compassion or perspective when false guilt is in operation. Yet it is compassion for the person and for oneself that is required when someone has been hurt.

For teachers, much of the guilt that is experienced is false guilt, resulting in self-doubt, suspicion, and stress. As a teacher there are realistic expectations that must be achieved and maintained in order to function well in this education setting; however, it is the idealistic striving for perfection that drives a person into unhealthy habits. To change your patterns with guilt it is important to become reflective and to be willing to live with some discomfort until new methods of coping become more familiar and comfortable.

Real guilt is easier to deal with because it is concrete and can be confronted. It occurs when one's conscience

Wellness Wisdom

From the Employee Assistance Program for teachers

WELLNESS TIPS FOR TEACHERS

To work with your emotions use the following process…

- Notice what you are feeling. Name it specifically.
- Ask yourself, "Where did this come from? What is it telling me?"
- Ask yourself if this is a real concern or does it belong to someone else?
- Ask yourself (and trust), "What do I need at this time?"
- Imagine yourself receiving the very thing you need.
- Again, notice and see what has changed.
- Is there anything further you need at this time?

Please send your comments or suggestions to:
Marie Wall, Wellness Program
c/o NLTA, 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1
Tel. 726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, Ext. 265; Fax 726-4302 or 1-877-711-NLTA (6582)
e-mail: mwall@nlta.nl.ca

or "self-evaluator" indicates that a wrong has been committed and a person has been hurt by our behaviour. This harm may sometimes be willful, but more often it is unintentional yet hurtful all the same. Real guilt results in feelings of remorse for one's actions rather than feelings of shame. Real guilt is much easier to manage because the offending behaviour can be identified and rectified. It is often perpetuated against someone we love or care for and we do not want harm to come to that person. Real guilt causes us to feel remorseful and calls us into action to reconcile with the offended party and change our own behaviour so as not to experience that type of feeling in the future. Real guilt calls us to self-honesty, to become more aware of our actions and their effect on ourselves and others. It demands personal emotional growth in accepting the feelings of remorse and the harm done, to work through these feelings and learn to forgive ourselves and reconcile with the other. This process is an avenue to build self-esteem. When a person acknowledges his or her behaviour, works through the feelings, and takes action to reconcile with the other person, he/she appreciates a deepened acceptance of oneself and the knowledge of being able to handle uncomfortable situations.

There are some things you can do when you experience guilt. The first is to identify if you are feeling real or false guilt. To reflect on what you are feeling, ask yourself, "Am I feeling shame, anger, or remorse?" If the answer is remorse, there are some definite things you can do. Identify what action has been harmful, who has been hurt, and what needs to be done to rectify the situation. On the other hand, if the feelings are shame or anger, false guilt is most likely at play and external expectations are the culprit. In this instance the work becomes yours. Ask yourself, "What am I needing? Is it approval or acceptance?" Then as a mature adult it is essential to learn to give yourself that validation. Accept that some people may not understand your actions or motives. The test is integrity. If you know your actions do not counter the integrity of your work, then you can release the guilt and move on.

Remember, feelings (including guilt) are neither good nor bad. They are messages to help you understand what action needs to be taken. While real guilt is a choice, conscious or unconscious, false guilt is a compulsive pattern that does not allow the freedom to be responsible in one's actions. The first step to change is always identifying the problem, since if we do not identify the problem, there is no need to change it.

Marie Wall is an EAP Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Marie Wall (ext. 265) or Kathy Taylor-Rogers (ext. 242).

Betty Hann

Debbie Williams

Project Overseas 2003

A Tale of Two Teachers

by BETTY HANN & DEBBIE WILLIAMS

Early in July, 42 teachers from across Canada met in Ottawa to begin three days of workshops at the Canadian Teachers' Federation. While there, teams prepared for their upcoming ventures to various parts of the Caribbean and Africa as part of Project Overseas 2003. Betty Hann and Debbie Williams are two NLTA teachers who participated this year. Here are their stories.

Betty Hann – St. Vincent

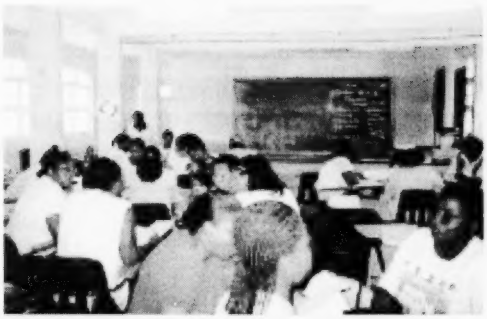
As part of a team of six women, I traveled to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean. St. Vincent is a lush, mountainous island whose inhabitants are proud of their home and welcome visitors with open arms. Aside from our educational connections, people we met on the street and those we swam with at the local beach were very friendly and interested in what brought us to St. Vincent. A neighbourhood couple treated us to fresh mangos and coconuts and a tour of their home and garden. Similarly, the teachers we worked with were very helpful; their similarities to colleagues at home far outweighing their differences.

Our first week there was a settling-in week with free time in between official meetings with our co-tutors, union representatives and the Minister of Education. During this week, the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers' Union (SVGTU) planned outings for us to the Vincy Mas carnival, tours of the Leeward and Windward sides, and the Botanical Gardens. Our team also took a day trip to the island of Bequia and some of us toured the Tobaggo Cays.

Teachers in St. Vincent and the surrounding islands receive an inservice opportunity only once a year, when the Canadian Teachers' Federation, in collaboration with the NLTA and other provincial associations, provide teams of Canadian teachers who are willing to volunteer their time and share their knowledge in various subject areas. Schools are open from September to June in St. Vincent, so this inservicing happens during teacher vacation time. Although our class size was not supposed to change after the second day of inservice, some classes continued to grow as teachers tried to gain a little added knowledge in several subject areas. As well, it was not unusual to have children attend classes with their parents, and some were there every day for the two-week period.

Our team, along with co-tutors from St. Vincent, taught four hours daily for two weeks. Each day began with a devotional time during which beautiful songs of praise filled the school. Prayers, readings and lessons were presented by the local teachers. My classroom was overcrowded, very hot, and furnished with only a portable chalkboard (this was one of the best city schools). We offered courses in Language Arts, Math, Information Technology, Action Research and Trade Unionism. We also conducted a day of workshops when classes rotated to learn about Gender Equity, How to do a Workshop, Trade Unionism and Action Research.

Teachers in St. Vincent are facing the same problems as teachers in other parts of the world. They talk of discipline problems, vandalism, stress in the workplace, lack of adequate nutrition for children, problems with parental support, children with behavioural problems and learning difficulties, lack of material and human resources and so on. Although the problems are the same, the scope of their difficulties is much broader. Their classes are not equipped with anything; staplers, pens, pencils and paper are considered luxuries. They have very few books or other materials to use for resources. There are no substitute teachers, so that when a teacher is out sick, another teacher must take over an additional class. Sometimes I had the chance to sit and reflect on the situation while I was still immersed in it. I thought about how little these teachers have in this impoverished situation, with very little chance for professional development, but in spite of all this, they were very professional, enthusiastic educators. Like teachers everywhere; they want to be effective in the classroom and are striving to meet the needs of their students with the few resources they have. With the efforts and attitudes of the teachers and the dedication they have from the SVGTU, I am confident that the education system will continue to see vast improvements in the future. They are truly appreciative of the help Canadians are providing.



Teachers from St. Vincent working in a Language Arts inservice.

Debbie Williams – Sierra Leone

The Canadian Teachers' Federation sponsored a Project Overseas in Sierra Leone for the first time in 10 years due to a civil war that has left its scar on the country. "Horribly beautiful" is how Freetown, the capital looked upon close inspection. Due to a civil war known for its atrocities, many people from all over the country sought a haven from the rebels in the city causing a population explosion. Infrastructures were decimated and blackouts and water shortages continue in the city two years after the United Nations moved in. During our stay, the city was obviously in the control of U.N. soldiers with over 16,000 U.N. peacekeepers stationed in the country. The destroyed buildings and shanty housing still could not hide the beauty of Sierra Leone's capital with its white beaches, tropical vegetation, and its colourful vendors and markets.

I travelled to Sierra Leone with three other Canadian teachers. Together, we worked as a team with educators and primary teachers in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone teachers have all been directly affected by the civil war, with many of them sharing stories of the loss of loved ones or personal encounters with rebels. One nine-year-old child told me how the rebels destroyed his family home with all family members fleeing for their lives. He told me how they searched in the bush for two days before they found his mother and how his older brother was shot in the arm while trying to escape. Many other Sierra Leoneons do not have to tell their story – their amputated limbs say it all!

With so much to feel hopeless and discouraged about, the people of Sierra Leone, and particularly the teachers that we worked with during our stay, displayed a pride in their country and zest and energy to rebuild and reform the education system. Their enthusiasm spilled over to the Canadian team, and although many of their situations and experiences were overwhelming to us, their optimistic spirit was nothing short of inspiring.

The 60 primary school teachers that joined us in the capital city were from all over Sierra Leone, many travelling for days to participate in the workshop. Together with our co-tutors we touched on teaching in Social Studies, Language Arts, Science and Math as well as classes on classroom management, child development and teaching strategies.

Some of our most stimulating discussion occurred during weekend workshops on AIDS, Gender Equity, and Peace Education.

Many citizens, including teachers, have died of AIDS in Sierra Leone and although teachers realize that education is the key to prevention, introducing the topic to primary and elementary students was a novel idea. Since only 2% of girls attend school in Sierra Leone, gender equity was a very important topic and the Sierra Leone Teachers Union has committed to promoting "Girl Education" in their country.

Due to the civil war many schools were destroyed by rebels while others were used by rebels as headquarters or by displaced families for housing. Consequently, Peace Education was a timely topic for the teachers of Sierra Leone who have concerns about how to reintegrate child soldiers back into the classroom and help students deal with post-war traumas.

It was difficult at times to comprehend how teachers managed without copies of curriculums, textbooks, basic school supplies, electricity or even washroom facilities. Although their concerns are at a more extreme level, it was interesting to note that many of the topics discussed by teachers in Sierra Leone are much like the issues we discuss as Canadian teachers – class size, lack of resources, gender equity, and teacher pay.

I hope that in some small way I was able to assist the teachers I worked with over the summer. In one conversation with my co-tutor I expressed my concern about benefiting so much myself from the experience but feeling that I was leaving so little; she said, "just the fact that you are here gives us hope".

I was asked by Dr. Dugba to pass on to my fellow teachers his e-mail address. He is spearheading a new program to train Early Childhood/Primary Educators and is seeking volunteers to teach courses. If you are interested, contact Dr. T.M. Dugba, Dean, Faculty of Education, Njala University College, University of Sierra Leone, email: nuclib@sierratel.sl.

We would like to sincerely thank the NLTA and CTF for the opportunity to assist these projects. It is a great opportunity for professional and personal development. Please feel free to contact Betty Hann at bhann@hotmail.com or Debbie Williams at dwilliams@awsb.ca if you want more information on Project Overseas.

Le voyage était magnifique

An Extraordinary Field Trip

by ASHER CUTTING

"Le voyage était magnifique". This is a phrase many of my students were saying when we returned from the Port au Port peninsula in October. Through the efforts and support of our parents and administration, our Grade 6 intensive core French class was able to go on a truly extraordinary field trip to a beautiful small town called La Grand'terre.

La Grand'terre is no ordinary town though; it is a community dedicated to the preservation of the French language in Newfoundland and Labrador. In this town of about 1,000 residents, there is a French school, a French historical society and museum, a French radio station, a French community centre and even a French television station. I am getting ahead of myself though. Our trip had many fascinating stops along the way.

Our journey through the beautiful Port au Port was made ever so enjoyable by a wonderful class of Grade 6 students. Everyone was on their best behaviour for the entire trip and I was able to let the students feel free to explore the French environment and make the most of the trip.

Our trip began here, in Springdale, but quickly moved to the Newfoundland and Labrador Insectarium in Deer Lake. Our guide, Mr. Hollet, greeted us at the door and the tour began.

Our first exhibit was the butterfly house, a greenhouse wonderfully decorated with trees, flowers and an indoor pond, which is home to hundreds of butterflies. We were all invited into the green house and encouraged to let the butterflies land on us. The children were absolutely enthralled by having the little winged creatures try to land on their hand or shoulder. Some students, however, had reservations about "Letting a dirty bug land on them." Those fears were soon forgotten once we stepped in and got to know the little guys.

Our next stop was Rouzes Brook Harbour, where an outstandingly supportive parent, Marina Doupe, had gone during the weekend to drop off a lunch for our students. When we arrived in town, there was a wonderful spread waiting for us with all sorts of goodies such as homemade cinnamon rolls and cookies. This was a wonderful and well-timed repose for the travellers. After our snack, we continued on to our final destination, La Grand'terre, or Mainland, as it is more commonly referred to.

On the way, we took in some of the Port au Port peninsula's breathtaking scenery. We saw seaside cliffs and rolling hills that form some of Newfoundland's most spectacular coastlines. The "French Ancestry" trail is easily worth the extra hour and a half drive it takes to do the loop when you are on your way to Stephenville.

Upon our eagerly awaited arrival to Grand'terre, we were greeted by the co-ordinator of the community centre, Katherine Fenwick, who showed the boys and girls their respective sleeping quarters for the night. Once our camp was set up for the evening, we decided it was time for a well-deserved meal. The local restaurant, the "The Sea Breeze", was more than willing to aid us in this endeavour.

Upon our return to the school, some of the local students organized some activities to do with our students (In French of course). We played some games and got to know each other. At about nine o'clock, we packed it in and watched a movie, only to fall asleep as we did so.

The morning greeted us with a wonderful breakfast organized by the school, followed by a visit to the community centre. The tour was comprised of stops at the school and the community radio and television stations, all of which are dedicated to the preservation of the French language in Newfoundland and Labrador. The facilities are extraordinary and the people working there believe in their cause fully. They are committed to the promotion and continuation of the French language in our province.

Our first stop was a Grade 6 language arts class. It takes some time to adjust to a completely French environment. The students and teachers are expected to speak French once they have crossed the threshold and entered L'école Ste. Anne. The class we visited was quite receptive to our class and invited some students to visit them again next time they were in town.

The television and radio stations were merged into one department that we were able to thoroughly investigate. There was nothing scheduled for the television station to air that morning so our students were able to watch local productions on the big screen. This was an excellent presentation that showcased some local French talent.

Perhaps the most emotional and impressive part of the tour was the museum. Having strong links with one's ancestors is vital in the continuance of one's culture, and the museum brought many aspects of the French ancestry to life.

Our time soon ran short, and our departure was inevitable. On our way back home, we took in several destinations that are a must for anyone going on a trip to the French shore. One of the more memorable stops was the Newfoundland and Labrador Alpaca Farm. Just in case you're wondering (and I was before we went) an alpaca is an animal that resembles a llama, and the farm was full of them. We were all given some grain to feed to the alpacas. We put on a brave face and let the six feet tall alpacas eat out of our hands. This was a one of a kind experience that the students, and myself, will not soon forget.

Danny's bakery was our next stop. This is one of Stephenville's more popular places to "sneak into" when you have a few spare minutes, and dive into their pastry display case. Our tour guide gave us a marvellous demonstration of how to make bread and decorate cakes, a skill we were allowed to practice with our very own cup cakes. This was perhaps the highlight of the trip, and definitely a positive and rewarding way to end our wonderful journey.

Asher Cutting is a teacher at Indian River Middle School in Springdale.

School Rep Seminars a Great Success

This past fall the first in the series of NLTA school representative seminars were held in Corner Brook, Grand-Falls-Windsor, and St. John's as part of NLTA's initiative to meet with school representatives each year. The intent is to keep school representatives informed and up to date on NLTA programs and services as well as inform new school representatives of their important role within the structure of the NLTA.

Participants in Grand Falls-Windsor listen intently during one of the many informative sessions.

Teams of administrative staff from the NLTA planned and carried out the day and a half sessions throughout the province. The agenda items included a follow-up session on the topics from the 1999 seminars, sessions on NLTA programs and services, *Who's Who at the NLTA*, the viewing of the new *NLTA and You* video, a group discussion on *What's a School Rep to Do?*, which involved a review of case studies of various situations that school representatives may have to deal with, as well as a review of the *School Representative Handbook*. A question and answer session was included with each session and school representatives had an opportunity to provide feedback as well as ask questions on any issue that concerned them.

Feedback from the seminars was very positive with comments such as "very informative", "well presented information", "well worth attending", and "information is invaluable for me in doing my job as school representative". NLTA staff found the sessions to be just as rewarding as they were able meet one on one with the NLTA school representatives and provide them with essential information about the NLTA.

Seminar participants in St. John's take part in a small group activity.

The province has been divided into nine regions and three seminars will be held each fall so that schools will be provided the opportunity to have a representative attend a seminar every three years. The next series of seminars will be held in the fall of 2004. A notification of dates and locations will be announced as soon as they are available.

Don Ash, Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA, presents a session on the programs and services of the BES Division.

Note: Sherri Sheppard, a teacher and school representative at Presentation Junior High in Corner Brook, will be featured in the Jan/Feb issue of *The Bulletin* in a new section entitled *Profile of a School Representative*.

What's News? What's Important?

by BEVERLEY PARK

I once saw a photograph of a herd of wild elephants in Central Africa seeing an airplane for the first time, and in a state of wild collective terror. As, however, there were no journalists among them, the terror died down when the airplane was out of sight.

Like Bertrand Russell, the author of that quote, I believe that journalists and the media are too often in the business of creating news instead of reporting it. Think about the coverage of Bush's war on terrorism or, dare I say, the recent election campaign in this province. What constitutes "news" is both subjective and "influencable".

Asking what is news is akin to asking the question, "What's important?". The only possible answer is "That depends". In education, for example, the question of what is important will get a very different response depending on who you ask – and even depending on the timing of the questioning!

In general terms, for a student, the important thing is the opportunity to explore and to have fun, to feel safe and secure, to have a sense of belonging – and yes, through all of that, to learn. For parents, the important thing is the well-being of their children – and that includes, but is more than, their academic well-being. How would a teacher respond to the question of what is important in education?

Strangely enough, that is not such an easy question to answer. Why is that so? Perhaps because we just haven't thought about the bigger question. Perhaps we don't have time… or we do not take the time. Maybe we are happy with what everybody else is telling us is important. Maybe we feel it's not for us to say. That, to me, is a startling thought!

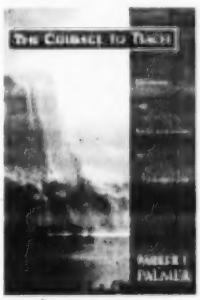
If I, as a teacher, do not define what's important in education, then who? It would be a sad commentary on the profession if we would allow such an important question to be always answered for us; if we never articulate just what it is we believe is important. We are, after all, the professionals. We are the group with the educational background, the expertise, the practical knowledge. We are the ones who have chosen to make this our life's work. Are we not in the best possible position to define what is important?

I am not suggesting that this be an entirely singular endeavour. Of course a teacher must be more than aware of what students and their parents take to be important. And what the general public and the government says is important will shape our views as well. It goes without saying that we would have to consider the views of and consult with those who share our interest in, and our responsibility for, education.

But we have to first know what we believe in order to meaningfully collaborate in defining what is important in education. If we have not given serious thought to these issues we will be both negligent and culpable in not providing the expertise that only professional educators can provide. Our contribution to our community, the gift we as teachers can share, has to be the gift of our thoughtfulness, of our educational expertise and insight.

Even Albert Einstein weighed in on the question of what is important in education. He cautioned educators to "[...] guard against preaching to young people success in the customary form as the main aim of life. The most important motive for work in school and life is pleasure in work, pleasure in its result, and the knowledge of the value of the result to the community."

But before we become too influenced by anyone's views, even the likes of Albert Einstein, we need to do some deep thinking about the internal driving and defining forces… not the external and sometimes "created" forces… because they are often "news" whether or not they are "important". We have to figure out what's important for us. Through answering the fundamental question of what is important in education, we create purpose.



Promise yourself to make time this holiday season to explore the question for yourself, in your own terms. Ask yourself – what is important for you as a teacher? What ought to be important to others in the work of a teacher? Think about it. Then act on it. Let it define who you are and how you do the essential work you do.

If you have the opportunity to do some professional reading – or if you want to make a gift to yourself this Christmas, consider Parker Palmer's book, *The Courage to Teach*, [published by Jossey Bass]. In this book teachers are challenged to "reconnect with their vocation". It recognizes that teaching is such hard work that at times we may become disheartened; however, it reminds us that if we do reconnect with the defining forces, the initial motivation that led us to be teachers, it will remain the most rewarding of professions.

Beverley Park is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.

Supporting Culture and Innovation

Report on the Provisions and Operation of the Copyright Act

"CTF seeks an amendment that would permit teachers and students to use digital technologies, subject to the limitations specified, as an educational tool."

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has been an active participant on copyright-related issues over the past 20 years with the principal objective of ensuring that students and teachers have access to the widest possible range of copyright materials in order to learn and teach effectively within a society that is increasingly knowledge dependent.

In a brief to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, CTF focuses primarily on the issue of the need for an education amendment that teachers and students urgently require and that a number of important and related concerns must be resolved as well. These are fully addressed in the Copyright Consortium of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) report to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage which CTF endorses. CTF participated in discussions leading to the development of the set of proposals therein to strengthen, clarify and improve the *Copyright Act* on the following issues: Crown Copyright; Database Protection; Rights Management Information; Technological Protection Measures; Terms of Protection; Internet Service Provider Liability; Statutory Damages; Individuals with Perceptual Disabilities; Libraries, Archives and Museums.

The rapid evolution of technology has resulted in an enormous increase in the educational use of the Internet. It has become an essential tool in helping students and teachers alike. It is therefore critical that the members of the Standing Committee not only recognize this reality but support measures to enhance opportunities for all of Canada's children and youth to benefit fully from this important information source.

The amendment supported by the Canadian Teachers' Federation is based on student and teacher participation in a program of learning under the authority of an educational institution and is limited to material that has been made "publicly available" on a communications network, by or with the authority of the copyright owner, without restrictions to access.

CTF seeks an amendment that would permit teachers and students to use digital technologies, subject to the limitations specified, as an educational tool. This would not compromise the copyright owner's right to market those works for other purposes. Educational institutions presently pay for numerous other uses and CTF believes it is appropriate that they continue to do so. These include subscription databases, licensed software, on-line courses and curriculum resources that include copyright materials and subscription databases. Material that is made freely available on the Internet should, however, be treated differently for educational use. These materials are often used for class and homework assignments and communicated regularly by e-mail between students and teachers.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation believes the proposed educational amendment to the *Copyright Act* is fair and equitable, and would help restore the essential balance between the rights of copyright users and the creator community.

The proposal is as follows: Amend the *Copyright Act* such that an educational institution or a person acting under its authority, including a student, may do the acts listed below in relation to all or part of a work or other subject-matter that has been made publicly available on a communication network, provided the act is done in a place where a student is participating in a program of learning under the authority of an educational institution, is done for educational or training purposes, and is not for profit, and provided that the source is mentioned giving the names of the author, performer, maker, or broadcaster if provided in the source: (a) use a computer for reproduction, including making multiple reproductions for use in the course for instruction; (b) perform in public before an audience consisting primarily of students of the educational institution, instructors acting under the authority of the educational institution, or any person who is directly responsible for setting curriculum for the educational institution; and (c) communicate to the public by telecommunication to or from a place where a person is participating in a program of learning under the authority of an educational institution.

The amendment would not apply if the educational institution or a person acting under its authority has actual knowledge or reasonable grounds to suspect that the work or other subject matter has been made available to the public on a communication network without the consent of the copyright owner.

The rationale for CTF's proposal is compelling and persuasive. It is outlined within the brief submitted by the Copyright Consortium of the Council of Ministers of Education to the Standing Committee. CTF endorses the following points:

- Obtaining copyright clearance for real-time classroom use of the Internet by students and teachers is not practical or possible within any acceptable time limits; if a student wants to include an image or text from the Internet in a class assignment, there is no time to obtain permission, even if the copyright owner can be identified and contacted, since copyright owners of digital works can be anywhere in the world.
- The federal government invests millions of dollars in projects designed to develop Internet skills among Canadian students, while current policy, as reflected in the copyright law, makes illegal much of what the students do under these federally funded projects.
- The amendment would not apply if the copyright owner has taken steps to prevent access to the material by using a symbol, password, encryption, or another technological protection measure; it would apply only to material placed on the Internet with unrestricted access.
- A negative financial impact on copyright owners resulting from the amendment is unlikely since it would apply only to material that is put on the Internet without any expectation of payment.
- Even if the assumption regarding expectation of payment is incorrect, there is little likelihood that collectives will make available blanket licences for items accessible on the Internet.

In conclusion, CTF has urged members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to recognize that the Internet is more than a medium for commercial ventures. Its original purpose was to facilitate enhanced global communication, discussion and sharing of information on a not-for-profit basis. That dimension is essential and even more crucial for those living in Canada's rural and remote regions. This surely means that public policy considerations must be given high priority if Canada's copyright legislation is to reflect a fair and equitable balance between the rights of users and creators. This, suggests CTF, necessitates the adoption of reasonable and practical exceptions that serve the public interest.

2002-04 School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees

The following are the NLTA representatives on the 2002-04 School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees. These two-year committees are established in accordance with Article 5 of the new Collective Agreement (Article 16 in Labrador West) to provide the opportunity for teachers to discuss with representatives of their employer, local issues such as board policies, physical conditions of the school, curriculum issues, and holiday schedules, that impact on their work life yet are not grievable items under the Collective Agreement. Your Association sees these Committees as being valuable avenues for dealing with employer/employee issues at the local district level. **(C) = Chairperson**

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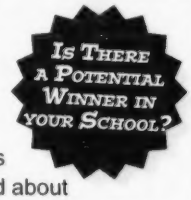
NLTA AWARDS 2003-04



Each year your Association honours several of its members with four prestigious awards. Please take a moment to read about them. If you feel that someone within your school qualifies for nomination for one of these awards for the 2003-04 school year, please contact your school representative who will forward the name and information on this person to your branch president or the appropriate special interest council president.

Special Recognition Award

This award was instituted by Johnson Incorporated to recognize the 100th Anniversary of the NLTA. It is presented annually to an active member of the Association who, while a teacher in the province, has made a major contribution to the **cultural, social and/or community life** of Newfoundland and Labrador. The award recognizes contributions in the areas of the arts (music/literature/visual arts), community service, and/or municipal politics. All nominations must be **received at the NLTA Office by January 15th**.

Allan Bishop Award

This Award was also established during the NLTA Centennial Year to recognize outstanding service to NLTA at the **provincial** level and it is named after former NLTA President and long-time staff member, Allan Bishop. The award is open to any active or life member of the Association, except that current members of the Provincial Executive are ineligible for the award and a provincial past president is ineligible for the award within three years of his/her presidency. Nominations must come from branches or special interest councils and must be **received at the NLTA Office by January 15th.**

Bancroft Award

This award, named in honour of James Frederick Bancroft, the first president of the NLTA, was established in 1980 during the 90th anniversary of the Association. The award was established to recognize the outstanding service given to **branches** by the dedicated and talented teachers whose efforts have helped make NLTA the strong association it is today. Nomination forms must be **received at the NLTA Office by January 15th**.

Barnes Award

This award was established in 1987 and is named for Dr. Arthur Barnes, a long-time supporter of the Association, who, in 1920, became the first Minister of Education. The award was established to recognize outstanding professional development services provided by teachers at the special interest council level. All nominations must be **received at the NLTA Office by January 15th**.

All nominations for the above Association awards must be made on the proper nomination form which can be obtained from your local branch president or the NLTA Office and must be submitted by the deadline indicated in order to be considered.

Calendar

PRIMARY/ELEMENTARY SIC CONFERENCE
April 29-30, 2004
Hotel Marystown and Sacred Heart Elementary, Marystown. Call for Presenters – If you have a topic you would like to share or know of someone with skills/information that would be of interest to primary and elementary teachers, contact Theresa Jarvis at tjarvis@bpsb.nf.ca. For further information contact Clyde Jackman, Tel: 709-279-2870, Fax: 709-279-2177 or e-mail: cjackman@bpsb.nf.ca.

CTF CONFERENCE: MOVING FROM A CULT OF TESTING TO A CULTURE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
May 13-15, 2004
Ottawa. This conference seeks to engage the teaching profession, our education partners and the wider public in a dialogue intended to move us from the harmful cult of testing to a culture of professional accountability. Featuring plenary sessions by Alfie Kohn, Ken Leithwood, Lorna Earl & Anne Rodrigue, Andy Hargreaves, and Lise Charland. Workshop themes include: authentic accountability; impact of the media on accountability; comparing and contrasting provincial perspectives; redefining accountability; leadership for accountability; strategies for taking control of accountability; impact of accountability on equity issues; alternate indicators of accountability, and teacher testing; implications & alternatives. Registration fee: $428.00 (includes continental breakfasts, lunches, materials and GST). The Ottawa Marriott Hotel is the official hotel for the Accountability Conference 2004. CTF has negotiated reduced rates ($117) and the hotel is holding a block of rooms. Please book early for accommodations which are available on a first-come, first-served basis until April 12, 2004 at 1-800-853-8463.

For more details on the conference, visit the Canadian Teachers' Federation website at www.ctf-fce.ca.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE
May 19-21, 2004
Battery Hotel, St. John's. Contact Linda Pike, Tel: 709-754-2440/41, Fax: 709-754-1805; E-mail: linda@ves.k12.nf.ca.

Dates to Remember

January 2004

Jan 15	**Deadline:** Barnes, Bancroft, Allan Bishop, and Special Recognition Award Nominations
Jan 15	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
Jan 16-17	NLTA Executive Meeting

February 2004

Feb 1	**Deadline:** Applications for Educational Leave – teachers must make prior application to school district
Feb 26	NLTA Executive Meeting
Feb 27-28	Joint Council Meeting

March 2004

Mar 7-13	Education Week
Mar 18	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications
Mar 31	**Board Deadline:** Notice for retirement at end of school year
Mar 31	**Deadline for Applications** (on or before March 31): Centennial Study Award; International Conference Presenters Program

Education Week 2004 March 7-13

Learning... A Class Act
Apprendre... Une Affaire De Classe

- **Expanding Your Horizons**
- **Reveal the Hidden You**
- **Opening Doors**
- **Make a Difference**
- **Be the Best You Can Be**

The 2004 Education Week Opening Ceremonies will take place at J.R. Smallwood Elementary in Wabush, Labrador.

Education Week 2004 kits will be mailed to schools early in the new year.

NLTA
Christmas Hours

Please be advised that the NLTA Building will be closed from December 24th to January 4th (inclusive) to allow staff to enjoy the holiday season.